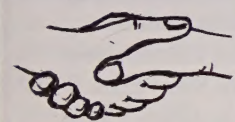




Dangerous Memory

by Ann Horgan



According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees a refugee is a person who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country'. As I write, there are 11

million such people. There are as many again wandering hungry, homeless and traumatised within their native country or seeking asylum at ports and borders of "friendly" countries.

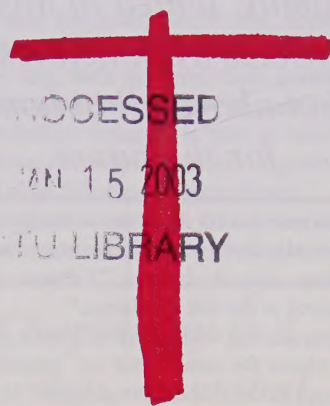
In Sudan alone, there are an estimated four million internally displaced people. Their only crime is to have been born in a country that is divided by war, oppression and religious fanaticism. Their tragedy is that their brothers and sisters in "developed" and "peaceful" countries shut their eyes and their ears to the sight and sound of their suffering.

In fifty years from now will people be asking the same questions of our generation that survivors of the Holocaust have been asking since the 40s? Will there be the same disbelief that in our time, humanity could have acted with such inhumanity? To some this might sound over-stated and even offensive. But the fact is that as I write, legislation regarding refugees worldwide becomes increasingly xenophobic and isolationist. Present policy in Europe, America and Australia is more about keeping out or isolating the stranger than welcoming him/her in. When I was in El Paso two years ago three men trying to cross the Rio Grande from Mexico into Texas drowned while many spectators, including border guards,

stood by and watched. Certain media frequently refer to "bogus" asylum seekers. Racism rears its ugly head in a tower block in Quinton as a young family's window is covered in egg yolk. A detention centre costing millions of pounds goes up in smoke as refugees protest at their treatment. There was no sprinkler system installed at the centre. The poorest countries continue to harbour the greatest number of refugees.

Welcoming the stranger is not something that is specific to Christians. It is a social practice accepted in theory by people of all major faiths. It is an obligation for all members of the human race, brothers and sisters of one another. To Christians who grapple with questions regarding the "legitimacy" or otherwise of the refugees in our midst I offer the following reflection.

The model par excellence for welcoming the stranger is the account of Abraham's reception of the three strangers in Genesis 18:1-14. We read that Abraham "ran" to meet them. He begged them not to pass by. Sarah was duly told to make bread, and a



Refugees

Asylum seekers, refugees, displaced persons - inevitably strangers in the land where they seek a haven from the trauma or difficulties that have caused them to leave their home land. This issue of *franciscan* tells a little of the stories of some who have come to these shores, offers some theological perspectives on welcoming the stranger, and describes something of the legal processes they encounter here.

Contents

Dangerous Memory	1
A Twist in the Tale	3
The Immigration and Asylum Act (2002)	4
Community Addresses	5
Asghar's Story	6
Theme Prayer	6
Minister's Letter	7
Icon of the Flight into Egypt	7
Hilfield Families Camp	8
Befriending the Refugee	10
Community Routes	12
Book Reviews	14

"tender calf, cream and milk were set before them." What hospitality! No courtesy is omitted, no awkward questions asked. The strangers are received as they are. They are recognised as bearers of joy, and blessing. All rather exaggerated, you might be heard

One bread, one family, united in love, insecurity, loneliness but above all in hope for the future.

to murmur, but for Abraham as for the writer of Genesis there was no other way, because as they saw it, it was "Yahweh (who) appeared at the oak of Mamre."

Many asylum seekers come from a culture that places the same value on greeting the stranger as did Abraham and Sarah. My first meal at an asylum seekers' home was something I shall never forget. 'A'. was a young mother with four children recently arrived from a war zone in rural East Africa. With hardly any knowledge of English she was trying to build a home and new life. I had dropped in to say hello and when it became obvious that food was about to be eaten I stood up to leave. There was dismay all round. Did I not want to eat with them? Maybe I did not like their food? All this expressed with great courtesy but with equal misapprehension. So I stayed. We sat at a round table. Their food consisted of a very large ingira or "pancake" on top of which was meat in a sauce. As the guest I was invited to bless the food. We ate with our fingers, breaking off some of the ingira and dipping it in the main dish. The lively conversation was around school, English class, a harrowing visit to the benefit agency, joys and sorrows. One bread, one family, united in love, insecurity, loneliness but above all in hope for the future. On the way home I thought how no theology book on

Jesus frequently ate and drank with the socially and religiously unaccepted of his day.

Communion could have touched me more than this unforgettable experience.

Jesus frequently ate and drank with the socially and religiously unaccepted of his day. His detractors knew too well the significance and consequences of visiting those "others". "Why does your Master eat and drink with them?" In building accommodation centres a government that refuses to be generous with asylum seekers is destroying the very heart of their culture. People in accommodation centres cannot practise hospitality or be easily visited. On

the other hand to put asylum seekers/refugees into flats or houses that no one else will accept, is to humiliate and degrade them. Integration is reciprocal. To preach that asylum seekers and refugees must integrate in society, without encouraging society to open its heart and mind to the richness of other cultures and faiths is to promote exclusivity and racism. Legislation for integration will succeed very slowly, if at all, if we continue to see ourselves as the epitome of all that is civilised and true. No one people or doctrine can lay claim to the whole truth. When this happens disaster inevitably follows as the world has recently been forced to admit in tragic circumstances. The magnanimity of Jesus' inclusiveness is everywhere in the Gospels. More than 120 gallons of water are changed into the "best wine" (John 2. 10). He tells his disciples "When you have a party, invite the poor. That they cannot pay you back means that you are fortunate!" (Luke 14.13) One of my favourite gospel stories is that of Jesus cooking breakfast at dawn and the catch of fish so many that they could not haul in the net. Can we call ourselves his followers and not be generous with others, sharers and companions?

A modern parable of welcoming the stranger must be the novel "Chocolat". It is, in my opinion, a highly political and social commentary on the fear of the stranger in a closed society. Magnanimity can overcome the threat, real or imaginary, that a

The magnanimity of Jesus' inclusiveness is everywhere in the Gospels.

newcomer among us can pose. The "outcast" in the village was the one who brought salvation to the inhabitants. The restrictions imposed on the whole community by the power of one lonely man fell apart at the taste of chocolate made by one courageous woman who dared defy the status quo. How often the gift that is given becomes in turn a gift to the giver.

John Baptist Metz suggests that God for our time is the suffering God, the God of the afflicted and the marginalized. We may not find him elsewhere. Metz has written about "the dangerous memory of Jesus" which can move us to look for new possibilities of reducing suffering and fostering social change. Each new and unexpected encounter can evoke new ways of thinking and acting. More importantly, such encounters can compel us to ask new questions, or to ask the old questions differently. How can we live the Word so that we become witnesses to inclusivity? What are the real day-to-day implications for us in a multicultural society if we try to "act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God"? (Micah 6.8) How can we creatively and with imagination



celebrate the Lord's Supper so that we become truly companions? We must dare to be dangerous. *f*

Ann Horgan is a Religious Sister of Charity. She co-ordinated the Befriending Programme of Restore, a Birmingham Churches Together project supporting asylum seekers and refugees, and has recently moved to Ireland to work among refugees in the Order's schools.

franciscan

is published by
The European Province
of the First Order
of the Society of Saint Francis,
a Religious Order
in the Anglican Communion.
The Society of Saint Francis
is committed to follow Christ
in the way of Saint Francis of Assisi,
in humility, love and joy.

*

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the writers and are not necessarily those either of the Editorial Board or of the Society of Saint Francis.

Permission to reproduce any part of this publication must be requested in writing; please enclose a stamped-addressed envelope.

*

All editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

franciscan Editor
Hilfield Friary
DORCHESTER

Dorset DT2 7BE UK

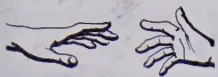
or email: franciscan@franciscans.org.uk

*

Printed at The Friary Press,
Dorchester

A Twist in the Tale

by Roger Greeves



The Immigration Reception Centre at Oakington, Cambridge, was opened in early 2000. It was designed to hold asylum seekers for speedy processing over seven days. Days one and two are spent preparing for the substantive interview on day three. After two more days' processing a decision is given on day six, leaving a day to finalize arrangements for the next stage.

Those sent to Oakington are new arrivals or new applicants who are deemed to have a potentially weak case and who do not have special needs. The first arrivals were from eastern Europe (Baltic States to Albania) but since then detainees have come from Africa, the Indian subcontinent and China. Admissions are dependent on the presence of Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) staff and interpreters in particular languages.

The Centre is managed by Group 4, with an establishment of about 220; medical and catering services are sub-contracted out. Office accommodation on site is occupied by governmental and non-governmental refugee organizations. In total there may be 500-600 people employed at the Centre. The capacity for asylum-seekers is 400, including women and children in families.

In March 2000, the Bishop asked me to go and set up a Chaplaincy in the Centre, at the instigation of the Diocesan Board for Church in Society. IND had initially been resistant to the appointment of a Chaplain, on the grounds that people were there so briefly, but agreed after some powerful lobbying by concerned groups.

When the Centre opened the buildings were not all ready. Group 4 management was very open to the need for religious provision, and generous in the setting aside of rooms. Virtually the entire first floor was turned into a 'Spirit Zone'. On one long corridor three large rooms have become a Christian Chapel, a Quiet Room and a Muslim Prayer Room (not Mosque, because of the possibility of sanctuary being claimed).

Lord, grant the people of Africa and the world as a whole peace so that no-one has to leave their homes to search for it.

The Christian Chapel has been furnished with the basics by Group 4, augmented by gifts from churches far and near. There are

symbols there from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions and there is an organ. Bibles are in plentiful supply, in all the languages present in the Centre. There is a Visitors' Book, which makes impressive reading. I liked the message from a Chinese detainee - 'Thank you. Have a good time' - but there are also many expressions of faith and prayers such as 'Lord, grant the people of Africa and the world as a whole peace so that no-one has to leave their homes to search for it.' There are some stunning one-liners such as 'In the Lord there is no prisoner' and 'YOUR decision is final.'

Group 4 has provided the Muslim Prayer Room with an excellent washing facility

In the Lord there is no prisoner.

beside it. The local Imam visited early on with his special compass and oriented the room correctly for prayers. He and his community presented prayer mats and caps and the Muslim Relief Agency in Birmingham sent more mats and copies of the Holy Qu'ran. Muslim detainees appreciate the facility greatly and use it well.

The Quiet Room is intended for the use of other religious groups - Jews, Sikhs, Hindu, Buddhists, Falung Gong - though obviously not all at the same time! Their needs will decide how the space is developed. This room, set between the other two, is windowless and uninspiring. Consequently, a Peruvian artist in Cambridge has produced collages on the themes of leaving and finding a home, which make that place rewarding to visit.

The human resources for Chaplaincy consist of one Chaplain/Manager of Religious Affairs, assisted by a team of Ministers representing the main Christian denominations and Islam. The regular acts of worship offered at present are Muslim prayers at the daytime hours, Roman Catholic Mass once a week, Anglican Eucharist on Sundays and daily Evening Prayers. Attendance does not exceed twenty at any occasion, a small proportion of those present. On a typical day there were resident 151 Christians, 42 Muslims, 18 Sikhs, 13 Buddhists, 4 Hindus, 5 Falung Gong and one atheist.

The pattern of Chaplaincy in this setting has to take into account the permanently transitional nature of the personnel - constantly changing shifts for the staff and asylum seekers hardly touching the ground. The Centre is like one large waiting room. The models are perhaps a hospital or an airport. The religious plant needs to be instantly accessible, capable of being used at any time for quiet, prayer and, hopefully, encouragement. Ministers need to be present every day, both to stress their availability and to give any chance of building up relationships before it is time to move on. Requests for help - spiritual or practical - need to be followed up immediately.

In a situation of such transience, and of such strong control over individuals, it is all

Chaplaincy is a sign, a symbol, a catalyst.

the more important to recognize that a detainee - '20/2K' for instance - is a whole human being, and that part of his identity is his religion or belief system. For many asylum seekers, religion is not a private hobby or a life-style choice - it is part of their identity, and in some cases bound up with the reasons for their flight. It seems right that the asylum seeker, having been detained, should find him or herself addressed as a person with a whole range of needs, one of which may be religious.

The staff present on the site are uniformly welcoming to Chaplaincy. They appear to understand what it is about and help greatly to project the role of the 'padre'. There is stress and tension among those working on site, and a Chaplain has an important role in being available to support individuals and help colleagues to work together.

The presence of Chaplaincy would seem to be a sign, a symbol and a catalyst. It can be a sign that this place of detention is not a secret, hidden, even shameful, operation, but part of the life of the whole society, albeit doing a difficult job. It needs recognition and understanding. Chaplaincy can be a symbol of a whole range of attitudes to asylum seekers, which run counter to the more xenophobic and other fearful opinions fostered by sections of the media. The simple action of donating clothes, toys and teddy bears, for instance, is a powerful message to all those who deal face-to-face with detainees. It is almost a touchstone for basic attitudes. Thus Chaplaincy can be a catalyst for the development of the culture of the Centre in the direction of humane values and respect for individuals.

Chaplaincy is concerned with the morale of the institution. In the case of the Group 4 staff, an initial pioneering spirit, which was

Continued onn page 5

The Immigration and Asylum Act (2002): What it Won't Do

by Nicholas Sagovsky



The Government is bringing in another Immigration and Asylum Act, the fourth in ten years. It contains some good ideas: increased opportunities for certain groups (e.g. fruit-pickers) to work in Britain legally; a concern that those who make a new home in Britain should understand and contribute to British citizenship. It also contains some bad ideas: the segregation of asylum seekers from the rest of the community in purpose-built accommodation centres; yet more reductions in the right of appeal against refusal of asylum; the creation of a 'white list' of countries (including countries with large Roma populations) from which requests for asylum will automatically be refused; denial of benefits for those who do not claim asylum on arrival.

What saddens me is that all this fails to address the real faults in the system, faults which generate wrong decisions and injustices all the time. An Immigration and Asylum Act which genuinely sought to improve the workings of the system would include the following elements:

1. It would ensure that the Home Office worked from accurate, up-to-date, independent information about countries (not difficult). The quality of information used in the name of the Secretary of State is often a disgrace. In the case of a refusal (by far the majority of decisions are refusals) it can lead to months of uncertainty and then to legal wrangling at appeal. Trying to interpret to asylum seekers letters of refusal which contain mistakes and misinformation about their own country is not easy. I recall a citizen of India looking in disbelief at a letter of refusal which had completely garbled the name of the ruling party of India.

2. It would ensure that the Home Office accepted the scientific evidence (for example in the *British Medical Journal*, 9 February 2002, p. 324) that people who have been traumatised do not tell the story of their trauma in identical terms every time they repeat it. Letters of refusal frequently seize on minor discrepancies of detail as though they *prove* someone is lying. Trying to explain to asylum seekers who have been tortured and have less than perfect English why minor variations in the way they have told their story have been used in this way can be very hard. I recall discussing with a

man who had been hung upside down and beaten through a whole night to what extent his loss of consciousness might account for apparent discrepancies in his description of the torture - only for him to demonstrate how, when the way he had been tortured was more graphically explained, what he had been saying in broken English made perfect sense.

3. There should be better accountability for court practice. The courts regularly summon people for crucial hearings by sending a letter in English which gives only the court's address without any accompanying map, travel directions or cash. Given the current dispersal policy, a person may be summoned for 10 a.m. to a court hundreds of miles away and not near a station (e.g. the Immigration Appellate Authority courts at Feltham). Asylum seekers are, presumably, expected to stay overnight or to travel without a cheap fare - quite possibly to a hearing which is adjourned because one of the parties is not ready to proceed.

4. It should be impossible for someone who is obviously and deeply scarred either mentally or physically, and claims this is the result of torture, to go to court without a competent medical report. Getting such a report within the time-frame available demands an alert and energetic lawyer. One case of which I have personal knowledge concerns a man who suffers severe 'thought-blocking' when he tries to describe how he was tortured. Though his back was covered with deep scars, his lawyer had obtained no medical report for the appeal hearing. The Adjudicator, noting that the lawyer had not thought a medical report was necessary, refused to accept the man's credibility. Nobody suggested that the Adjudicator simply look at his back. The appeal was refused on the basis that the man must be lying.

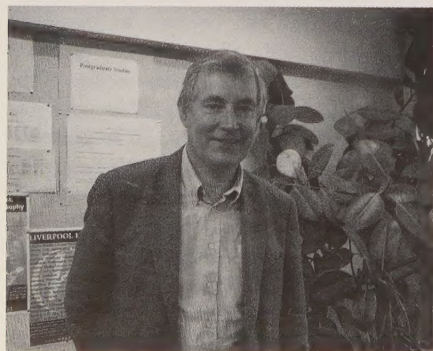
5. There should be a much greater concern to weed out bad lawyers. The level of practice is frequently poor, sometimes appalling, leaving asylum seekers aghast at the way they have been let down - yet such is their need of a lawyer that they dare not make a complaint. I know (as a British citizen) how difficult it is to find out how to make a complaint, let alone to bring one. If

the Law Society were concerned about this scandal, it could, for instance, have leaflets in various languages displayed at all the courts to tell people what standard of service they should expect from their lawyer and what to do if they do not get it.

6. The work of NASS (National Asylum Support Service) who have the responsibility for arranging accommodation and the provision of benefits for asylum seekers should be thoroughly shaken up. NASS is overworked and underfunded. The system frequently fails those it is meant to serve. It is common for asylum seekers to be left without benefits, sometimes for weeks at a time. If they ring, often on a daytime, long-distance call, they may well be asked to hold - which you can't do on a mobile phone, and when you're trying to tell someone you have no money. So far as I can see, NASS is completely unaccountable for the way it discharges its responsibilities.

Many Christians are involved with welcome and support in the community; far fewer with bail and support in the courts.

The Government spends a huge amount on maintaining a system which is supposed to test claims for asylum fairly. It doesn't. The system isn't working, but nothing in the Asylum and Immigration Act will address the underlying chaos. One of the reasons it is possible to get away with so much bad practice is that the people who suffer from it are quite without power to change it. Another is that a lot of people (lawyers, Group 4, housing providers, 'fly-by-night' employers) make money out of the chaos. Many Christians are involved with welcome and support in the community; far fewer with bail and support in the courts. Simply to attend one of the twenty or so Immigration Appellate Authority courts (for their location see the IAA website, www.iaa.gov.uk) and to observe what goes on could be the beginning of *conscientisation* - the term used by the liberation theologians when we begin to see the system through the eyes of its victims. Whoever the Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) is intended to help, it is certainly not them. *f*



Nicholas Sagovsky is the Liverpool Professor of Theology and Public Life at Liverpool Hope University College.

quite exhilarating, has modulated into a work force with a good spirit, adhering sincerely to core values of care and respect and perhaps the Chaplaincy helps to draw this out and encourage it.

Within the Centre there is a sense that a competent job is being done, both in handling the detainees and processing their claims. As a daily visitor, my impression was that of a genuine sanctuary. Most detainees are calm, if preoccupied and thoughtful. Their situation at Oakington is probably better than what they have come from and what they are going to. If only that were the beginning and the end of it. The things that happen to asylum seekers after they leave Oakington are deeply worrying. I was often uneasy. Here we are treating the newcomers to these shores with traditional British kindness and care, while what is really going on is the firm and fast processing of these unwanted people out of here as quickly as possible - 98% of them at any rate. What they are encountering is the smile on the face of the tiger - and I may be the smile. *f*



Roger Greeves is chaplain at Clare College, Cambridge.

Addresses

A Sense of the Divine A Franciscan Reader for the Christian Year

Edited by
Austin SSF,
Nicholas Alan SSF
&
Tristram SSF

price: £18.99
(plus £2 p&p)
From
The Friary Shop
Hilfield

AMERICA

Saint Elizabeth's Friary, 1474 Bushwick Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11207, USA ☎ (718) 455 5963
fax: (718) 443 3437 ☎ broderekssf@aol.com
☎ Minister Provincial SSF: broderekssf@aol.com

Little Portion Friary, PO Box 399, Old Post Road,
Mt Sinai, NY 11766/0399, USA ☎ (631) 473
0553
fax: (631) 473 9434 ☎ mtsinaifriary@aol.com

San Damiano, 573 Dolores Street, San Francisco,
CA 94110, USA ☎ (415) 861 1372; fax: 861
7952
☎ judehillssf@aol.com

Saint Francis House, 3743 Cesar Chavez Street,
San Francisco, CA 94110, USA
☎ (415) 824 0288; fax: (415) 826 7569
☎ csf@sfo.com

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND

The Friary, Saint Philip's Rectory, 115 Cornwall
Street, **Annerley**, Brisbane, Qld 4103, Australia
☎ (07) 3391 3915; fax: 3391 3916
☎ Minister General SSF: brdaniel@ozemail.com.au

Hermitage of Saint Bernardine, PO Box 46, **Stroud**,
NSW 2425, Australia ☎ ssfstrd@bigpond.com
☎ (02) 4994 5372; fax 4994 5527

The Friary of the Divine Compassion, PO Box 13-117,
Hillcrest, Hamilton 2034, New Zealand
☎ (07) 856 6701; fax: 6901; ☎ friary@franciscan.org.nz

EUROPE

The Friary, **Alnmouth**, Alnwick, Northumberland
NE66 3NJ ☎ (01665) 830213; fax: (01665)
830580
☎ alnmouthssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Clare's House, 87 Taysfield Road,
Birmingham B31 1JT ☎ (0121) 475 4482
☎ birminghamssf@franciscans.org.uk
☎ secretaryssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Francis House, 113 Gillott Road, **Birmingham**
B16 0ET ☎ (0121) 454 8302 fax: 455 9784
☎ birminghamssf@franciscans.org.uk
☎ secretarycsf@franciscans.org.uk

43 Endymion Road, **Brixton**, London SW2 2BU
☎ (020) 8671 9401; ☎ brixtoncsf@franciscans.org.uk
Provincial Bursar CSF: ☎ bursarcsf@franciscans.org.uk
Minister General CSF: ☎ & fax (020) 8674 5344
☎ ministergeneralcsf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Francis House, 14 Botolph Lane, **Cambridge**
CB2 3RD ☎ (01223) 353903 & 321576
☎ cambridgesf@franciscans.org.uk
☎ ministersf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Francis Convent, **Compton Durville**, South
Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES
☎ (01460) 240473; fax: 242360
☎ comptondurvillecsf@franciscans.org.uk
☎ ministercsf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Mary's Convent, 178 Wroslyn Road,
Freeland, Witney, Oxon OX29 8AJ
☎ (01993) 881225; fax: 882434

The Old Parsonage, 168 Wroslyn Road, **Freeland**,
Witney, Oxon OX29 8AQ ☎ (01993) 881227

Alverna, 110 Ellesmere Road, **Gladstone Park**,
London NW10 1JS ☎ (020) 8452 7285; fax 8452 1946

Flat 3/1, 62 Dalsarf Street, Barrowfield, **Glasgow** G31
4AT
☎ (0141) 550 1202; ☎ glasgowssf@franciscans.org.uk

Saint Mary-at-the-Cross, **Glasshampton**, Shrawley,
Worcester WR6 6TQ ☎ (01299) 896345; fax 896083
☎ glasshamptonssf@franciscans.org.uk

The Friary, **Hilfield**, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE
☎ (01300) 341345; fax: 341293
☎ hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk
Provincial Bursar SSF: ☎ bursarssf@franciscans.org.uk

House of the Divine Compassion, 42 Balaam Street,
Plaistow, London E13 8AQ ☎ (020) 7476 5189
☎ plaistowssf@franciscans.org.uk

10 Halcrow Street, **Stepney**, London E1 2EP
(020) 7247 6233 or 7737 0230
☎ stepneycssf@franciscans.org.uk

Minister Provincial TSSF: Richard Bird TSSF
32 Bristol Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33
2DL ☎ (01284) 723810
☎ ministerssf@franciscans.org.uk

Franciscan Aid, The Treasurer TSSF, 17 Treseders
Gardens, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TR ☎
franciscanaid@franciscans.org.uk

PACIFIC ISLANDS

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Douglas House, **Chinatown Lae**, PO Box 3411,
Morobe Province ☎ & fax: PNG 472 1842

All Saints' Friary, **Dipoturu**, PO Box 78, Popondetta
241, Oro Province

Saint Mary of the Angels Friary, **Haruro**, PO Box 78,
Popondetta 241, Oro Province ☎ PNG 329 7060

Saint Margaret's Friary, **Katerada**, PO Box 78,
Popondetta 241, Oro Province

Saint Francis Friary, **Koke**, PO Box 1103, **Port**
Moresby, NCD ☎ & fax: PNG 320 1499
☎ ssfpng@dg.com.pg

Philip Friary, **Ukaka**, PO Box 22, Alotau, Milne Bay
Province

SOLOMON ISLANDS

St Francis Friary, PO Box 7, **Auki**, Malaita Province
☎ 40031

La Verna Friary / Little Portion, **Hautambu**,
PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Patteson House, PO Box 519, **Honiara**, Guadalcanal
☎ Honiara 22386 Regional Office: ☎ & fax 25810
☎ francis@welkam.solomon.com.sb

San Damiano Friary, Diocese of Hanuato'o, **Kira**
Kira, Makira Ulawa Province ☎ 50031

St Bonaventure Friary, **Kohimarama** Theological
College, PO Box 519, Honiara, Guadalcanal

Holy Martyrs Friary, **Luisalo**, PO Box 50, Lata,
Temotu Province

Asghar's Story



Asghar is an asylum seeker. He lived in Iran until eight months ago, when he came to England. With the help of an interpreter, he told his story to Sister Maureen.

Now in his early 50's, Asghar is married and has two teenaged sons and a daughter in her twenties. However, at the present time he lives alone. In Iran, he worked as a building contractor in the city of Shiraz, borrowing money when he couldn't earn enough to support his family. He was depressed and frustrated by the inadequate educational facilities as schools have very few books and Muslim clerics dominate the education system. Religious teaching is emphasised at the expense of knowledge about practical things of life, often with dangerous consequences in factories and health care. Asghar was strongly attracted to the Christian faith, and wanted to be able to worship in the church. However, as his family was Muslim and prominent in city affairs, for Asghar to attend church would have endangered the lives of all the church members, and of his family. These factors together motivated Asghar to try to get himself and his family out of Iran.

There are frequent passenger flights between Iran and the UK and USA. Asghar approached a go-between, who for a fee of \$US10,000 each, would assist the family to leave the country. The fee would cover false documents and airfares. He advised that they split up to travel and attempt to reunite after a few weeks. Although it was difficult to save so much money, Asghar felt it worthwhile for living a normal and just life, where he would have freedom of religion.

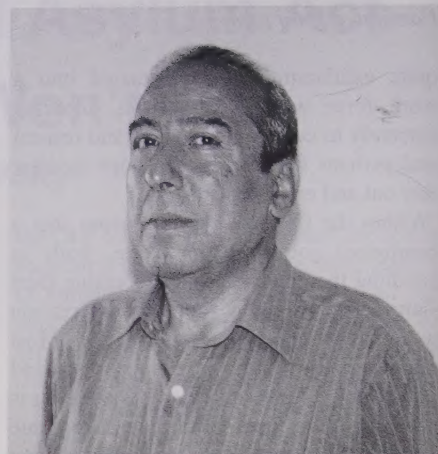
First to leave Iran was Asghar's daughter, five years ago. With less stringent laws in force than now, she was soon granted asylum and is supporting herself through medical school in England. Asghar and his family were given false documents, which would allow them visas, and Asghar's wife and sons flew to the USA. Asghar arrived at Heathrow and was granted a temporary visa. After a few weeks, he flew to America in the hope of joining his wife and sons, but at the airport there his false papers were detected. Immigration officials refused him asylum, and returned Asghar to the UK, knowing – as Asghar did – that he would be punished by imprisonment if he was returned to Iran.

On return to the UK, Asghar requested asylum and registered with the Home Office. While he awaits a court hearing in the hope of being granted Permission to Stay, he receives a weekly allowance and is provided with accommodation, the common practice being to house groups of 'single' men together, according to ethnic or language group. When he is given a date for the court hearing, he also hopes that, unlike many asylum seekers, his solicitor will not drop his case at the last minute, thus prolonging his state of uncertainty.

Asghar is very philosophical about his situation. He has adapted to English life in so far as he needs to, and has made friends among the local Iranian community. The Home Office expects asylum seekers to fill their days learning English, but Asghar finds the language very difficult and is disheartened about it. Through a Persian language gospel service, he joined Summerfield Parish church and attends a Persian Bible study group. He is delighted to be able to worship freely and talks about his faith in Christ to any who will listen. There are people in the church who support him in the process of applying for Permission to Stay. He hopes that it will not be long before he can be reunited with his wife and sons, either in this country or in America. *f*

Copyright

© The Society of Saint Francis, 2003
The First Order,
The European Province
All rights reserved
ISSN 0532/579X



Data Protection

The Society of Saint Francis voluntarily complies with data protection legislation in the United Kingdom; thus, if you are a subscriber, you should know that SSF holds your name & address on a computer database at Hilfield Friary, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE. If you have chosen to supply SSF with the details, your telephone number & e-mail address have also been recorded, plus the fact that you may be a Tertiary or Companion of SSF.

This information is only used by SSF and is not supplied to any other persons.

If you would like a copy of all data held under your name, SSF will supply you with the same for a pre-paid fee of £1.

If you wish to opt out of this database, you may do so, but it will entail you terminating your regular subscription to *franciscan*.



Jesus as a Refugee

This Coptic icon of the Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2.13-15) can be seen at Glasshampton Friary

Minister's Letter

Brother Samuel SSF
Minister Provincial of the First Order Brothers,
European Province, writes:

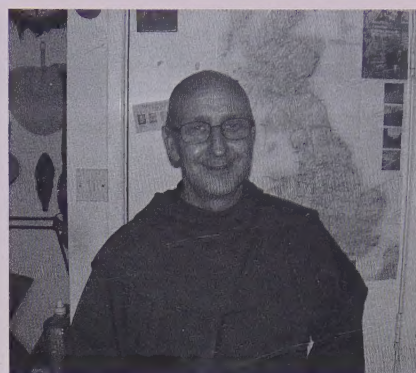
'How are you going to manage – being Minister Provincial and being Vicar of St Bene't's in Cambridge?' It's a question I've been often asked since the middle of the year when the one was added to the other. At the moment I'm not sure how, and at times it does seem a rather impossible task. The one role involves a good deal of travelling, including a major international trip each year to the Meeting with other SSF/CSF Ministers as well as visits to all our houses and brothers living on their own in the UK. There's the responsibility to be looking at the overview, on our life as a Society, on the relationship between the three orders under the SSF 'umbrella', on the Religious Life as a whole, on new directions for the future.

The other role, that of parish priest at St Bene't's, is more mundane, more focussed – on the church boiler, perverse as ever, on Joan now becoming housebound, on Daniel's confirmation class, on next Sunday's sermon.

Of course, there's no way the two jobs can be attempted without assistance from others, and I'm blessed that in both the province and the parish there's generous help on hand – people willing to share responsibility, to advise, and to stand in for me when even I can recognize that I can't be in two places at the same time.

But living in two worlds is perhaps something to which we are all called to some extent: to focus on the detail and yet to keep an eye on the wider picture; to 'think globally, act locally'; to belong to a particular congregation but also to know oneself as part of the Church Catholic; to be of the parish without being just parochial. It's the balance between the two which can inspire and yet humanize our christian life, our politics, our work, our vocation.

Anyway, it seems that this tension is part of the mystery of the incarnation, of the one who 'though he was in the form of God, emptied himself, and being found in human form he



humbled himself....' At Christmas we celebrate the revelation of the One who is everywhere and in all things, who yet chooses to be bound to a particular place and a particular time so that all people and all things might come to know the wonder and transforming power of the love that is at the heart of creation. And how can that be managed? *f*

Samuel SSF

Joy in all things

A Franciscan Companion

Published by the
Franciscan Association of
Great Britain

Canterbury Press

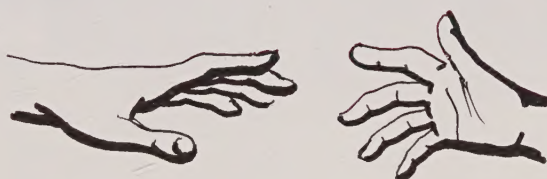
imitation leather binding

ISBN 1-85311-409-X

Price £14.99

*Available from booksellers and
Hilfield and Alnmouth Friaries.*

Theme Prayer



Gracious God,
your Son was forced to leave his home
and to seek refuge in another land;
have mercy on those who now are uprooted
from their home land
by famine, war or persecution.
Bless those who provide them
with food, shelter and medicines;
enlarge our hearts to welcome the stranger among us,
and help us to work for that day
when your kingdom will come on earth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Hilfield F

Still heaven

After the first Family short article for franc event as "a glimpse would not retract a was that first meet only common link Michael. Michael has one another out', and we rapidly establish which took place, and we all enjoyed, ensure the next year and never closed, even in Potteries one year. The hallmark of Family Many of us thought this is what parish Be that as it may, with year olds being acc circle, a safe but s eleventh, whilst the beach, line dancing, serious discussion on bonfire and final Eu and by which al Thank you, Francis your patience, inpa have little idea what if it's anything like then it will

If this sounds like please contact Simon



lies Camp

years!

71, I wrote a
described the
ty years on I
was describing
amilies, whose
and Brother
come and sort
paring, which
nt discussions
nd fun which
us came back
a fact, we've
camp in the
ave remained
ver the years.
hink now, that
ould be like.
you find three
een year olds'
ek' for under
on Weymouth
ick-grooming,
nd a concert,
o all contribute
nd moved?
ospitality, for
r the years. I
dally be like, but
in the rain!),
ng for.

Tony Barnard

ur your family,
-298-814236



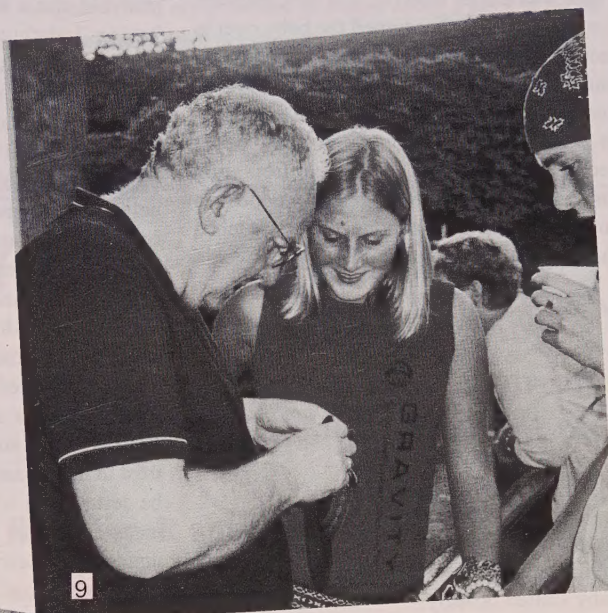
7



8



10



9



11



1 music makers for... 2 barn dancing in the friary courtyard; 3 Sr Jackie CSF with some face-painted campers; 4 bonfire builders... 5 the result! 6 Br Oswin Paul SSF with campers at lunch; 7 Br Hugh SSF and a group at Durdle Door; 8 the Revue! 9 Br Tristram SSF explains; 10 dirty hands... 11 to build a shelter; 12 friary brothers welcomed to lunch.



Befriending the Refugee

In the corner seat at the back of the bus, sat the befriender. The bus was full, the day and the bus were hot, the passengers were returning to the city from an excursion to a stately home. For the handful of befrienders this was all very familiar – the grass and the parkland, the evidence (faded) of splendour, wealth, privilege, discrimination. For those who a year ago had been living in Kosovo, Chile, Iran, Afghanistan the only feature which may have been meaningful was the dungeon, tucked away in a corner.

Next to the hot befriender at the back of the bus was a mother, on her lap a small baby, and beyond her a Chilean couple. Kneeling on the seat immediately in front so as to face the baby was a boy of 12 or so, perhaps the baby's brother. The temperature, the lack of oxygen, tiredness, hunger, other discomforts – life was telling on the baby who in spite of the mother's efforts registered a long, loud protest. The boy ahead peeped between the seats, smiled, and tickled the baby's nose. There was a brief interval, and the complaint resumed. The mother turned the baby over to face the befriender. Now the befriender – unmarried, over 70, ex-schoolteacher – had a very poor self-image in the matter of relating to small children; somehow they never seemed to respond. This confrontation unnerved him. He managed to produce a smile, extended a cautious finger, touched the baby's nose, and waited. What would

The befriender is advocate and adviser, not just a well-meaning chum.

happen? Redoubled protests? Cold indifference? A scowl? None of those – the baby smiled broadly.

For that instant, the befriender knew that the title meant something. Communication had occurred. The bus reached journey's end, the passengers dispersed, the befriender found his way home – a changed befriender from the one who had set out that morning, for he had sat (metaphorically) at the feet of the baby. He had learnt from the baby what he had failed to learn from the training provided by the organization, or from the experience of visiting a family over a period of months.

The organization did its best for its 40 befrienders by way of education. There was an induction course, and a police check. Befrienders attended lectures which attempted to instruct them in the complexities of the relevant legislation, the agencies (statutory and otherwise) set up to deal with and to help asylum seekers, and the practical dilemmas in which they often find themselves. The befriender, after all, is a befriender in the senses of advocate and adviser – not just a well meaning but useless chum.

Furthermore, the organisation was headed

by dedicated full timers with a manifest belief in the work as a Christian ministry, with years of experience in it, and something more best described as an infectious enthusiasm. So the organization provided both information and role models, in which befrienders were invited, by implication, to believe and trust.

After the introduction, came the experience. A very young married couple from an Islamic country and with two little boys – a 4 year old and a baby – had been housed (as having Indefinite Leave to Remain) in a council flat. This was in a needy estate on the edge of the city where the presence of asylum seekers attracted hostility which took threatening and distressing forms – food thrown at windows, refusal on the part of neighbours to speak, damage to the car. The befriender, whose experience was related earlier, with a female colleague, was allotted to this family, and a preliminary introduction took place with the coordinator who had made the first contact.

There followed, at irregular intervals over four months, a series of Sunday afternoon visits which in some respects proved a test of trust in the organization. It was impossible to be certain that what was said was what was meant, or, that was said and meant, was understood. Befrienders have to learn to use basic English, slowly. Opportunities abound

for misunderstanding, not to say blank incomprehension, always masked by smiles. The family was unfailingly welcoming, lavishly hospitable, and willing to share current problems. The befrienders felt that their experience was one of being befriended, of being unquestioningly welcome in the family circle even when this included Dad's parents on a visit from home, and the young unmarried brother. Here was a family from a middle class, entrepreneurial background whose commercial contacts with the West had resulted in imprisonment by the regime and eventual acceptance in Britain as genuine asylum seekers.

Mum and Dad took it in turns to go to English lessons in the car, while the children were virtually prisoners in a top floor three-bedroomed flat surrounded by hostile neighbours. The befrienders wrote the letters of application for rehousing, helped with the

The befrienders felt that their experience was one of being befriended.

interpretation of gas bills and benefit rules, listened to the problems, played with the little boy, always remembered to take their shoes off when entering the house. The man avoided any physical contact with mum and shook hands with dad, the woman kissed mum and smiled at dad. All the time, effort and energy were directed at penetrating the barriers set up by cultural and linguistic differences, and establishing trust and friendship. The experience was not one of condescending charity, for, in many ways, the befrienders were the recipients. The high ground of the rich was denied them – they had to abandon the notion of the refugee as



Refugees and Befrienders

destitute and come to terms with the refugee as having resources, two computers in the flat, TV, car – yet nonetheless refugees and in need of a neighbourly welcome. The befrienders were left without a sense of having in any way satisfied that need, as after the sixth visit the family moved away from the area; they had family in another city.

***Faith, hope and love
abide, - and the
greatest of them...?***

So trust was tested, unforeseen circumstances had snatched the refugees from the attentions of the befrienders who were left with a real sense of loss - and of hope. The hope was for a better deal for the family, and for another family to befriend with a chance to build a more stable relationship than that which had been terminated so abruptly.

What of the baby in the bus? What had come to the befriender with the baby's smile? Here was a moment in which the differences of language and culture counted for nothing, a moment of unmediated communication – a meeting. The befriender was reminded that faith, hope and love abide – and the greatest of them? In its pre-verbal, pre-Christian, pre-Islamic way, the baby had the answer to that question.

Is that all? In the task of befriending the refugee all that is needed as the essential additive to the training, the knowledge and the opportunity – is love? Can we ask, where does this love come from, if it is to build a bridge between the befriender (in a position of security and power, with a network of family and friends, a place in society) and the refugee whose resources (beyond possibly a spouse and children) are nil, and has in addition a recent history of trauma, and separation from home and culture? For empathy to occur, the befriender needs to search for the person experiencing loss, separation, exile, failure whom he or she inevitably is or was, and let the love come from that person.

He upon whom the baby smiled in the bus remembered the small boy he once was, weeping in the lavatory at boarding school for home and parents – remembered further that consolation came to him from a member of staff who was himself a lonely refugee from Hitler's Germany. That gentle, good man was the one who had the power to bring a smile through the tears. f

Compton Durville 2003

Lent Quiet Day, Saturday 8 March

Workshop for Putting on a Quiet Day, Tuesday, 18 March

Passiontide Quiet Day, Saturday 12 April

Holy Week and Easter with the Community

Monday 14 April to Sunday 20 April - come for Monday to Thursday, or Thursday to Sunday, or the whole week.

Priest for the Triduum - Sue CSF

Open Afternoon - Saturday 26 April

Gardeners Practical and Prayerful, 28 April - 1 May

*

Quiet Days are from 10am to 4pm; drinks are provided & please bring a packed lunch.

Suggested contribution: Quiet Days £10; Workshop £15 Please book to attend.

For the complete 2003 Programme or more details of the above, contact:

Saint Francis Convent, Compton Durville, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5ES

Tel: 01460 240473 Fax: 01460 242360 email: comptondurvillecsf@franciscans.org.uk

Hilfield Friary 2003

Pre-Lent Quiet Day, Saturday 1 March 10.00am to 4.00pm

*

Holy Week and Easter

A residential week, Sunday 12 to Sunday 20 April

Bookings in writing please to the Guest Brother SSF

*

Secret Garden Open 8 - 11 May

Open daily from 2.00pm to 5.00pm - Admission £2.00

Companions' Day- Saturday 14 June, 10.00am to 4.00pm

*

There will be NO Hilfield Summer Festival for 2003

For more information about these or any other events at Hilfield, please contact

The Guardian, Hilfield Friary, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE

Tel: 01300 341345 Fax: 01300 341293 email: hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk

WEBSITES

C/SSF European Province: www.franciscans.org.uk

CSF American Province: www.communitystfrancis.org

SSF American Province: www.s-s-f.org/

SSF Australia / New Zealand Province: www.franciscan.org.au

Hilfield Youth Camp: www.orders.anglican.org/ssf/hilfieldyouthcamp

Third Order SSF European Province: www.orders.anglican.org/tssf/

Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury: www.franciscans.ac.uk

Korean Franciscan Brotherhood: www.francis.or.kr/ol

Celebrating Common Prayer: www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/
Exciting Holiness: www.oremus.org/liturgy/e-h/

Anglican Religious Communities' Year Book: www.orders.anglican.org/arcb/

Church of England: www.church-of-england.org/

Anglican Communion: www.anglicancommunion.org/

Community Routes



Joyce Yarrow CSF

An ad hoc group of First Order Chapter people assembling to go on an excursion (members of the European Province unless otherwise indicated): Phyllis CSF, Helen Julian CSF, David Burgdorf TSSF (American Province), Samuel SSF, Colin Wilfrid SSF (Australia-New Zealand Province), Clifton Henry SSF (Pacific Islands Province), David Francis SSF, Christine James CSF, Mannaseh Birahu (Pacific Islands Province), Carolin Clapperton TSSF.

◆◆ First Order Chapters

Helen Julian writes:

The Testament of Saint Francis read by male and female voices from Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland, America, Jamaica, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Zealand; the closing act of the First Order Chapters brought home to me how much we are an international community, and how universal is the appeal of Francis.

The Ministers General, Ministers Provincial, and chapter delegates from each province had come together at the Mercy Center, Burlingame, just south of San Francisco, in September, along with two observers from the Third Order. We heard about the common threads and the contrasts in our lives - everywhere prayer, community life, hospitality; but in the Solomon Islands there is a waiting list of 50 to join the brothers, while in the European Province vocations are lower than for many years. The Rule of Life was in need of revision to reflect varying cultures and church backgrounds; we came away with an agreed set of headings, and work to do in our provinces to flesh out how we live these basic principles of our life.

It wasn't all work, and we had time to see something both of San Francisco itself and of the beautiful countryside and sea nearby, to worship in city churches, and to take part in a Franciscan Festival organised by the American Province.

The Testament was nearly the end of the meeting - but it was followed by a spirited rendering of a new song by **Cecilia** - a Canticle of the Instruments. We were all

issued with instruments (mostly of the banging or rattling variety - no special skill needed!) and joined in with gusto when our instrument was mentioned. The Franciscan tradition of being fools for Christ was alive and well in San Francisco. May it still be going strong in three years time, when we meet in Canterbury for the next First Order Chapter.

◆◆ Korean Sisters

CSF has made its first covenant with an emerging Franciscan community. At the First Order Sisters' Chapter in San Francisco in September they agreed a six year commitment to mutual support in prayer, information sharing, and visits with the Korean Franciscan Sisterhood. Frances and Jemma, the first two members of KFS, made their first profession in November 2001, having by then been living together for two years. They had both previously been members of another Korean religious community. Their ministry is mainly hospital based, organising volunteer visitors and taking sick communion to wards and to homes. **Pamela Clare**, from the American Province, was in Korea for their profession, and it is hoped that she will be able to make an annual visit.

◆◆ An Ecumenical Franciscan Handbook

Brother **Damian** has been one of an ecumenical team from the Franciscan Association of Great Britain who have produced a reference guide to Franciscan spirituality. Called, 'Joy in All Things', its contents include short biographies of Clare

and Francis, prayers of Francis, a guide to living as a Franciscan today, Franciscan places of pilgrimage to visit, and potted histories of all the Franciscan houses in the U.K. Brother **Samuel** has contributed an article on Contemporary Attitudes and other SSF contributors include **Austin**, **Tristram** and **Guire**.

◆◆ School's Out

The school summer holidays once again saw the brothers in Birmingham involved in a range of activities for young people in their area, including 5-a-side football, 'Laser Quest', a day at an outdoor pursuits centre (archery, canoeing, assault course), a DJ Workshop and a trip to Drayton Manor Theme Park. The year-round thrice-weekly youth club sessions at St Clare's House continued as usual, but these extra summer activities, run by SSF and their partners in the *Merritts Youth Project*, brought together 84 young people from three estates, along with a significant number of parents and other local adults. In the autumn half term holiday, the brothers were joined by two sixth-formers from Oundle public school who stayed at St Clare's House for three nights and were involved with extra activities with the young people who normally come to club.

◆◆ Pedal Power

The health of the Birmingham brothers has been given a boost, and spending on bus fares reduced, by the generous gift of a brand new Dawes hand-made bicycle. The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has maintained his passion for bicycles and cycle mechanics despite being no longer able to ride himself, and a number of organisations and individuals in Birmingham have benefited from his gifts in the past. The brothers now have the use of two bicycles.

◆◆ Franciscans in Clerkenwell

Brother Jason writes:

Holy Redeemer parish had a close connection with SSF and the Religious Life well before my arrival! A former curate, Father John Hawes had a great devotion to Saint Francis and left London to become a RC Franciscan Hermit in the Caribbean - 'the hermit of Cat Island', about whom Peter Anson wrote a book. Whilst he was ministering in Clerkenwell Sister Rosina of the Sisters of Bethany (whose mother house was in the parish) was inspired by his Franciscan charism and she left SSB and founded the Community of Saint Francis.

Later, in 1943 Holy Redeemer was the setting for a mission led by Father Algy.

Since these early days, many Friars have preached in the parish. I am fortunate to continue this tradition, as well as being warmly welcomed into the lives of the locals. My week is made up not only of parish administration, but taking part in the daily liturgy, assisting with a weekly Mass at School as well as in the local day centre, helping in the preparations for First Communion and Confirmation, finding funding for a Youth Worker, alongside helping and supporting the Parish Priest and the members of the congregation.

This unusual Italianate styled Church has a unique and central part to play in the life of the community in which it is set. It is a privilege to be a part of this and to continue the Franciscan link with this parish.

◆◆ Distant Reflections

Kentigern John has just returned from two years in the stunningly beautiful country of New Zealand. He writes:

When I arrived in NZ for my exchange in July 2000 the brothers were running the Auckland diocesan retreat centre at Long Bay on the North Shore of Auckland. The wonderful centre was purpose built and consisted of substantial cedar clad chalets set on a hillside overlooking the ocean. The brothers had done a superb job in setting up this new venture for the diocese and, when it seemed right for us to move on, passed back to the church a thriving business. The centre was a partnership between the Diocese of Auckland and the Te Pihopatanga ki te Tai Tokerau, the Anglican Maori church in the north of the North Island, and the limited experience I had of Maori culture has left an abiding impression on me. It seemed to be a culture in transition from a very close knit rural stability to the different pressures of urban fractured living. Maori are blessed in this period in that, they have words, concepts, images that can knowingly articulate the need for community and connectedness, and they possess a deliberate will to keep alive the bonds that unite people rather than seeking what separates and divides. They seemed less conscious of class,

education, wealth or indeed race than we in Britain. I know that I had little direct contact with the other side of the story, of Maori families and communities trapped in poverty and abusive relationships with alcohol and/or each other, where family ties become restrictive bonds. But I did get the sense of a much clearer owning of the broken side of their culture and, again, a will to bring people back on board.

The brothers moved from Long Bay and left the diocese of Auckland towards the end of my stay with them and are currently establishing themselves in an ecumenical social services village in Hamilton in Waikato diocese. It is a venture that seems both ambitious and full of promise.

◆◆ Third Order Appointments

Carolyn Clapperton, Minister Provincial, and **John Fox**, Communications Co-ordinator, have both come to the end of their 6-year terms in 2002. The new Minister Provincial from January 1, 2003 is **Richard (Dick) Bird**, formerly Archdeacon of Lambeth, now living in Suffolk. The Communications Co-ordinator is **Alan Williams**, a priest in South Wales; the new Provincial Treasurer is **Derrick Gierth**, a Lay Reader in Nottingham; the Provincial Novice Guardian is **Stuart Ballard**, a training and development specialist from Skipton and the Chapter Secretary is **Susan Holmes**, a Diocesan Registrar living in Carlisle.

◆◆ ART

Anselm, Austin, Christine James and Martin (sadly without **Tristram** who was prevented by illness from being with us as a speaker) attended Anglican Religious Together (ART) at Swanwick from 2nd to 5th September. On offer were the knowledge and enthusiasm of Professor Paul Bradbury and George Guiver CR, as teachers of liturgy, the shared questions and thoughts of the 30+ Anglican religious in attendance, the delights of Southwell Minster and the Midlands Railway Centre. No wonder we decided unanimously to go ahead with plans for ART 2003 at Ditchingham.



Selwyn Suma SSF from Papua New Guinea has been spending some time in the European Province, mostly in Shepherd's Bush and at Hilfield Friary.

◆◆ RIP

Brother **James Edward** of the American Province died in New York on September 4. He recently spent three years in the European Province where he made a valued contribution until health concerns caused his return to the USA. Nevertheless, he was able to spend a further 6 months in Chaplaincy work before his final illness.

Bob Pope TSSF died on September 11, in Cardiff, where he had been living in recent years. He was professed in 1965 and during the 1980's served as Guardian (as the title was then) of the European Province.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

◆◆ Round-up

Wayne Martin took the new name of **Maximilian** when he made his profession in first vows on October 7. Bart Simpson was admitted as a novice at Hilfield on October 4, taking the name **Lawrence**. He moved to Glasshampton the following day. **Maureen** is now the General Secretary for CSF, and continues as Provincial Secretary. **Rowan Clare** has begun ordination training at Westcott House Cambridge. **Jason, Kentigern John and Elizabeth** have moved to Halcrow Street. **Augustine Thomas, John and Stuart** all moved to Hilfield in September. **Damian and Mark Edmund** have moved to Alnmouth. **Nicholas Alan** has moved to Glasshampton and **Malcolm** to Shepherd's Bush. **Dominic Christopher** is spending three months at Gladstone Park.

It is expected that the brothers will be leaving St. Helen's Vicarage, Burghwallis, in January after nearly three years there as a house of contemplative living. We are very grateful to the Diocese of Sheffield and to Fr. Michael Johnson the parish priest for their encouragement and support.

Giles is visiting the Community of the Divine Compassion in Zimbabwe until January 19, and **Geoffrey** has returned from three months there.

Rose has now returned to the European Province.

Edward James and Dominic have withdrawn from the noviciate.



Revue time again - Rowan Clare, Maximilian and Augustine Thomas performing at the annual Hilfield Youth Camp, which they helped to lead.

Book Reviews

Laurent Gallant OFM & Andre Cirino OFM
The Geste of the Great King
Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi
 ISBN 1-57659-175-1
Franciscan Institute St Bonaventure Univ.
 NY, 2001, \$14.95

I was delighted when I came across a copy of this beautifully presented little book. Many readers of *franciscan* will be vaguely aware, as I was, that Francis had written a series of small devotional offices, for use in addition to the official Divine Office, but how could one lift the confusing array of texts and rubrics from a volume of sources and actually pray them as Francis had intended? This book answers that desire and gives us too an invaluable new insight into the meditations and reflections of Saint Francis. At the heart of this book are 'pray-able' translations by Murray Bodo OFM of the fifteen 'psalms of Francis,' which he composed from verses of the Old Testament Psalms and other sources. Each is presented with the other necessary texts (such as the 'Praises to Be Said at all the Hours' and the Antiphon 'Holy Virgin Mary') so that they stand alone as complete offices. A useful set of clear tables show which one of the fifteen to choose at any season and any time of day, whether praying in this way 'as Francis did seven times daily' or as little as once daily. The book is illustrated throughout with delightful illuminations based for the most part on details from the San Damiano Crucifix, but the text is also 'illuminated' in two other ways: A set of musical settings for all the texts follows the main section (a CD recording is apparently also available), but there is also a substantial introduction and academic commentary on the texts and their meaning to Francis. In this section the texts are presented in a more rigorously direct English translation produced by Gallant and Cirino themselves. It is in the introduction that the genre of the heroic medieval 'geste' is explained, although the choice of this title for the front of the whole volume would be the only thing I would really want to question, as I simply didn't know what it meant! On the other hand, it is the other title 'Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi' which appears on the spine, but the commentary rightly questions how appropriate that traditional title is for the texts as a whole ('Psalm' 15 for instance being a Christmas text.) Francis, it seems, didn't call his little offices anything, he just prayed them. This book can help us to do the same.

Desmond Alban SSF

James M Byrne

God - Thoughts in an Age of Uncertainty
 ISBN 0-8264-5169-1

Continuum, London, 2001, £16.99

What a daunting prospect – to review 'God'! As the author confesses: 'A book on God can

only be a failed raid on the intangible and unattainable ... we can never know for certain if there is a God'. James Byrne claims to 'have been long dissatisfied by both traditional theism and modern atheism' – an intriguing opener. He contends that 'the idea of a God who is like us but much more powerful is no longer credible, and that we best understand God when we remain silent'. To believe in God 'as classically conceived by the Jewish and Christian religions he finds to be (almost) impossible' because of the inherent mix of qualities involved, e.g. 'The maker of each of us in the divine image and likeness, yet also passionately partisan in love and war; all-loving yet permitting a world of evil, pain and suffering'. The author explores the range of images of God portrayed in the Bible, highlighting the confusion involved and the striking psychological and cultural difficulties that have arisen from the perception of God as 'a capricious despot, a domineering father, or a benign but seldom seen uncle'. The fact that God is nearly always seen as being 'male' has set in train centuries of patriarchy, which the Church has been loath to modify. Byrne confesses 'one continues to be surprised by the often puerile and simplistic ideas of God which even otherwise well-educated people have'.

The author questions the validity of the traditional concept of 'a God who exists outside the world and acts on it as a person acts in and on the natural world'. He concludes that in some mysterious way 'there is an encounter of the self with its own depths and its own possibility' which in effect links our everyday life with the divine. Some fascinating insights are put forward in relation to a multi-faith view of 'God and the self', e.g. 'experiences in thousands of different human cultures are no less real than an experience founded on an encounter with the God of Judaism, Islam or Christianity.' He even goes as far as to suggest that 'the

encounter with God may be used to legitimise our current wishes, desires and self-identity... perhaps we reach our own certainties first and then use God to ground them?' He highlights the potential dangers of this concept; one only has to consider the current terrorist Islamic ideology to see where this might lead. Byrne claims that 'our religious experience then becomes a relation not to some other Being but to the depths of our own being', emphasising our dependence on living in relation to other human beings. Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God in the nineteenth century, which Byrne examines carefully and highlights the dual outcomes – of a sense of liberation and a sense of dislocation – which he regards as highly significant. He believes that we have not yet come to terms with this aspect in our post-modern age. Kierkegaard equated this modern condition with bewilderment and despair, to which he sees a religious response as being the only answer. Byrne also examines the field of negative theology – the *via negativa* – which claims that 'God is unknown and unknowable, infinitely beyond both being and non-being and, in our contemporary expression, beyond both theism and atheism'. It is highly relevant to our modern world that no concept can realistically encompass the fullness of God; we cannot, in the end, grasp the ultimate in a thought or a word. So this is a challenging and valuable book for thoughtful Christians who wish to review their perceptions of God, and I suggest that it should be essential reading for current students of theology.

John Fox TSSF

Austin SSF, Nicholas Alan SSF, and
 Tristram SSF (Editors)
A Sense of the Divine

A Franciscan reader for the Christian year
 ISBN 1-85311-381-6

Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2001, £18.99

This book commends itself immediately by the attractiveness of its presentation – a hardback cover in Franciscan brown with gold lettering, and a clearly laid-out text. It would make an ideal gift for a Franciscan friend.

The stories of Francis and Clare are told through their own writings and those of their contemporaries and later followers, so that we follow them from their youth through to their conversion and dedicated service, to their death and canonisation. Everything that pertains to their life is here – the founding of the Order, community relationships, dealings with the authorities, personal suffering. Here, too, are the great principles they lived by and taught – poverty, chastity and obedience; prayer, study and work; humility, love and joy.

What makes this Franciscan book different from others we may have read is that the writings are grouped together thematically to coincide with the seasons of the Christian year. For example, the writings for the Christmas period focus on the incarnation; those for Lent cover the traditional

Hilfield Friary Shop

Most books reviewed in *franciscan*,
 plus almost any other book,
 can be obtained by mail order from
 Hilfield Friary Shop.
 'Freeland' cards, Traidcraft,
 L'Arche, One Village and Leprosy
 Mission goods are also on sale.

Write, phone or fax;
 Shop open Tuesday - Sunday,
 2.30 - 4.30 pm

Hilfield Friary Shop
 DORCHESTER Dorset
 DT2 7BE UK

Phone: (01300) 341345 (Tue-Sat)
 Fax: (01300) 341293
 email: hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk

Credit card facilities available

penitential themes, leading to concentration on the cross in Passiontide. Seasonal readings may be replaced by those given in an extensive supplement for Holy Days. It's helpful that lesser-known contributors in the latter category are introduced with a thumbnail sketch.

Insofar as this book incorporates a wide range of material from original source documents, it may well enlarge the reader's knowledge of Francis and Franciscanism. But the overriding purpose of the book is that it be used for devotional reading in the context of daily prayer and lectio divina. The editors advise that, 'In order to enter this world of the early Franciscans a modern reader will need to come to the texts with humility and willingness to hear, a kind of obedience to the word in which we encounter the Lord.' What they have produced has in it the potential for rekindling 'a sense of the divine' in those who are committed to following Christ after the example of St. Francis.

Evelyn Hughes TSSF

Michael Hare Duke

One Foot in Heaven

Growing Older and Living to the Full

ISBN 0-281-05399-5

Triangle SPCK, London, 2001, £7.99

Having joined the ranks of older people myself (I am sixty-eight) I was looking forward to an interesting read and certainly was not disappointed! Although a small book, its scope and range is impressive; the author draws on many personal experiences, being seventy-seven, and well qualified to write about such a complex and anxiety provoking subject. Hare Duke, TSSF, a retired Bishop in the Scottish Episcopal Church, was Chairman of *Age Concern Scotland* for six years. He cites many eminent thinkers, philosophers, poets and the Bible, includes relevant demographic statistics, and brings important insights from the field of psychotherapy.

Initially, Hare Duke draws a picture of contemporary perceptions of old age and highlights how society generally dismisses the old, preferring youth, beauty and glamour. We are reminded of the current shift in the relative ages of the population, with the elderly being far more numerous than the young. This presents a challenge to find new, positive images of age with which to encourage the majority. He compares old age, which for many begins after retirement, with the grieving process, drawing attention to four specific tasks that need to be completed before we can begin to understand that the Third and Fourth Age can bring fulfilment and new possibilities for developing our potential. These tasks are: To accept the reality of the loss: To work through to the pain of grief: To adjust to an environment in which the deceased (our career or occupation before retirement) is missing: To relocate the deceased (that which had to be given up) emotionally and

move on with life.

So we shall have more time to reflect on our lives. The elderly may not look much on the outside, but there can be quality inside; through this reflection process we are given the chance to change internally. He says that older people need to avoid colluding with the low esteem that society accords them. Ageism, he says, is akin to racism; both have a corrosive influence on society.

I very much like the chapter on the usefulness of play and how we might strive to master our anxieties, giving expression to distressing feelings through creative activities, just as in childhood when we used to act out our forbidden fantasies, e.g. our teddy could be angry on our behalf. He describes an interesting workshop in which the old are encouraged to 'revitalise their positivity and creativity around the future'. Lifelong learning should follow; he points to new opportunities through studying with the Open University and other agencies. Older people, he says, have much to offer the community by way of life experience, e.g. opportunities to listen to others. The author argues that 'precisely because we are living longer and healthier lives there is, as never before, a pool of vitality and expertise out there in the community ... Society should not waste it and the elderly should not allow their expertise to be squandered'. On the other hand he recommends that older people be offered counselling to help with the emotional adjustment to a different life phase.

Hare Duke addresses the issues of frailty, faith or the lack of it, death and how to prepare for it. He looks at the effects of emptying neighbourhoods and lifelong friends dying, and proclaims that society should allow everyone the opportunity to explore these issues openly and honestly. 'Let's celebrate the Old! ... Delight in their company, hear their stories ... and be grateful for what they have to give'. Finally, he advises planning the funeral, suggesting that perhaps the person about to die should write to or talk with loved ones before rather than after death; memories and anecdotes could be shared and old hurts forgiven.

This book is aimed at a Christian readership – it abounds with quotations from the psalms and other religious texts – which to me is a limitation, because suitably modified it could have a much wider appeal and benefit those with only a nominal faith or none.

Maria Fox TSSF

Kenneth Mason

Priesthood and Society (2nd Edition)

ISBN 1-85311-469-3

Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2002, £12.99

This thoughtful, inspiring presentation of priesthood as living sacrament, first published in 1992, quickly became a standard work. The present revision, reflecting on 11 September 2001, identifies our growing and largely unexamined split

between private and public concerns, together with rising anxiety and fear, as key elements in the contemporary context. This is explored alongside scripture and tradition. Priesthood viewed sociologically is vital in pointing to a solid ground for human existence. However the ground is God, whom no human can adequately represent, so priesthood is impossible, apart from the paschal mystery of God in Christ.

Mason traces an intrinsically subversive dynamic, flowing from divine grace, which co-exists as anti-structure within the necessarily institutional reality of the church. The radically liminal reality of the gospel helps to foster openness to God in the life of the church, thus enabling some degree of 'transparency to glory', of priestly being and function in the world. Mason strongly affirms as analogous and mutually dependent, the priesthood both of all the baptized, and of an ordained ministry. He exposes as unchristian certain ecclesiastical responses to secularisation. The primary context for the priestly ministry of the whole church is the whole world, not merely the internal life of the church.

The ordained are, albeit inevitably ambiguously, representative of Christ, not just of the church community or institution. They represent God's detachment from the church, and thus the possibility of gospel for the church, as well as for the world. Mason identifies the crucial training need as ascetical. Priests are to be deeply in touch with humanity, especially their own. Essential qualities are integrity, wisdom and self-effacing compassion. The model is Christ crucified.

Sue CSF

David Pullinger

Information Technology and Cyberspace

Extra-connected Living

ISBN 0-232-52397-5

DLT, London, 2001, £8.95

This is an interesting book, which in a sense poses more questions than it seeks – quite openly – to try to answer. The reader is introduced to the concept of social space and the encroachment of 'technology', particularly through the internet: personal interaction and activity with others is replaced by email communication, by web games, by chat rooms and so forth. This leads to split personalities: 'who am I when I can be "this" to one person online and "that" to another, face to face?' This is more an issue for the young, which leads to ethical questions for the future. There is a reminder of technology through the ages and human reaction to it, a useful synopsis of how and when the internet was born, and where it might be going. Again, this is set against and discussed in the context of relationships between people and the ethical dilemmas that arise as a consequence. A further aspect that is explored is the overriding wealth of information that is available through the web – not all of it accurate or tasteful. There is the expectation that all sources of information must be reviewed (leading to overload), be it

emails or possible websites to view before writing a report. But we are reminded that this is 'information' not 'analysis'.

The real issues as discussed in this book are the interaction of self and technology and what the implications are for society in the context of individuals interacting with other individuals. Technology is bringing about change in this area. People's awareness of themselves and their identities are being clouded as natural communication - from children playing to family conversations across the table - is being superseded when we turn to the personal computer for comfort through chat room dialogue. What a future! But this is where faith comes in, and the hope it can give in keeping technology in context, and reminding us of the importance of self and interaction with others.

Philippa Foster Back

Director, Institute of Business Ethics

franciscan

(published three times a year)

Subscriptions for 2003

United Kingdom	£6
Europe & Surface (outside Europe)	£7
Air Mail (outside Europe)	£8
<i>(SSF cannot reclaim tax on subscriptions)</i>	

Free Audio Version (for the blind and partially sighted): Tel (01963) 220512

For UK & Europe - please send to:

The Subscriptions' Secretary
Hilfield Friary, DORCHESTER
Dorset DT2 7BE UK

The preferred method of payment of Subscriptions is by UK Banker's Direct Debit; please request a form from the above address. Credit Card payments are also possible; individuals' Card details are not retained after each transaction.

Please make all cheques payable to:

The Society of Saint Francis

For America & Canada, contact:

Mrs Edward Webb
Fairhaven, C-092, 7200 Third Avenue
Sykesville, MD 21784-5214, USA

For New Zealand, contact:

Mr Harry Hepple
46 Norwood Road, Bayswater
Auckland 1309, New Zealand

For all other countries, please pay individual subscriptions by Sterling International Money Order, or by Bank Draft or by Credit Card to the Subscriptions' Secretary in the UK.

We do not send receipts, unless requested to do so.

Tina Beattie

Eve's Pilgrimage

A Woman's Quest for the City of God

ISBN 0-8601-2323-5

Burns Oates, London, 2002, £9.99

&

Hans Küng

Women in Christianity

ISBN 0-8264-5686-3

Continuum, London, 2001, £14.99

These two books are on the same essential theme: the place of women in Christianity. Their approach is so different that it may be worth considering them together. Both writers, one a man and the other a woman, have essentially the same picture of the future to be desired. The man approaches it objectively, with a historical study of the way in which women's roles have developed. Women in the earliest Christianity, in the early Church, in the Middle Ages, at the time of the Reformation, and in Modernity and Postmodernity are all covered.

The woman approaches it subjectively, in terms of a pilgrimage to Rome, and by means of images, which speak powerfully of the essential elements of life, and of the varying approaches by men and women. She goes round some of the sights of Rome, almost all the churches, and looks at the building or the art works there. They suggest many reflections, but all come back to something relevant to her main theme.

Both writers would like to see a less hierarchical attitude in the Church, and both link this with the feminine aspect in us. Both write of violence and the struggle for supremacy. The fact that the man writes in such a methodical way means that he covers factually much more history and in a different way. The woman explains at the beginning the way in which her own pilgrimage has been expanded into that of Eve and her approach is much more involved, though this is not to suggest that Hans Küng is detached. He clearly has felt strongly on the matter for some time. If proof is needed that women and men are complementary in their contributions, perhaps these books taken together will serve as proof that they have different goods to offer.

Gillian Clare OSC

David R. Law

Inspiration

ISBN 0-8264-5183-7

Continuum, London, 2001, £18.99

At first I wondered if this would be a useful book for those engaged in dialogue with Christian or Moslem fundamentalists who find security in their infallible book. Certainly it is a very thorough, scholarly examination of 'word-centred' and then of 'non-verbal' theories of biblical inspiration, giving the strengths and weaknesses of each. The author lectures in the history of

Free Audio Version
of
franciscan
for the blind and
partially sighted
☎ 01963 220512
please tell anyone
you think might be
interested

Christian Thought in the University of Manchester and the book resulted from research during a visiting fellowship in Kiel University: it has the quality of Germanic detail and the teacher's repetitive summaries. I enjoyed his description of theories of inspiration from Gore, through Farrer to Hanson and other contemporaries.

But it was the third section of the book that most interested me. Recognising that beyond all human knowledge there is a factor he calls 'the Transcendent', he takes Karl Jasper's word 'ciphers' for the signs or pointers to this factor. These clues can only be de-coded by those committed enough to engage in an interactive way. This will take them beyond the subject/object distinction. An exact prose rendering of a poem, for instance, misses the poetry. In Christian terms this leads to recognising that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is both the writer and the reader, each with their human limitations. He concludes the argument (which is worth the struggle to follow) by saying that, though the Bible is full of 'ciphers', the ultimate cipher is Jesus, the incarnate Christ.

Bernard, SSF

Geoffrey Duncan (compiler)

Harvest for the world

A worship anthology on sharing the work of creation

ISBN 1-85311-461-8

Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2002, £9.99

A surging awareness among all the mainstream Christian churches in the rich world of the wicked injustices which beset the distribution of God's gifts is no new thing. Here is a timely worship anthology for those who plan and lead public worship, as for those who pray privately, which has assembled material from all parts of the world and organised it helpfully.

Christian Aid is to receive all royalties from this publication, and will no doubt benefit indirectly from its use - but there is no indication of any relaxation of copyright. Presumably, the usual permissions should be sought for the reproduction of any item.

Anselm, SSF